

2 GOALS OF THE PLAN



In order to create a framework for discussion of goals and recommendations, the Steering Committee and the Department created a comprehensive issues map in the initial phase of the study. This was presented at the first public meeting in 1991, where there was opportunity for additional input. The Committee and the Department used this map throughout the course of the study as a reference to focus on and address the initial issues that prompted the study.

The Committee's discussion and understanding of these planning issues led to the development of goals in five planning areas: environment and open space, transportation, housing, economic development, and urban design.

ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE



Alewife is an area rich in environmental and open space resources. The district is surrounded by numerous publicly owned open spaces including two city-owned recreational facilities: Rafferty Playground, a small, neighborhood facility in the Cambridge Highlands Neighborhood and Danehy Park, a 50-acre, city-wide, multi-use facility.

Alewife's open space resources include the 115-acre Alewife Reservation and Blair Pond, both owned by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), and the city's Fresh Pond Reservation. Each of these facilities provides significant

recreational and environmental benefits to the city and the region. Determining the appropriate mix of uses for these sites will help to balance two important needs: protection of environmental resources and accommodating recreational use within the open space system. Although usually considered in conjunction with their land resources, water resources in and of themselves are also an important environmental feature of the Alewife area; these include not only the Fresh Pond Reservoir, but also Alewife Brook, Little River, Jerry's Pond, Yates Pond, and Blair Pond.

The City's draft growth policy document proposes a number of policies that suggest environmental and open space goals for the Alewife area. The open space policies clearly identify the need to protect and maintain important environmental resources, such as the Alewife Reservation. Recreational use of these resources by the public must be carefully planned and balanced with resource preservation. The need for and value of additional open space, both public and private, is also recognized. New private open space that is either visually or physically accessible to the public is seen as an appropriate component of new development, particularly in the city's evolving industrial districts. The Growth Policy document also recommends infrastructure improvements that will create a safer pedestrian environment and encourage bicycling and walking. This policy serves a number of objectives, including upgrading the city's physical environment.

To ensure that Alewife's open space and environmental resources are planned and managed to provide maximum benefit to Cambridge and the region the following goals are proposed.

PROTECT AND UPGRADE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The Alewife Reservation is a special urban wild, providing a habitat for a number of water fowl and other wildlife species. In addition, it presents recreational opportunities for nature lovers to walk and enjoy its unique landscape or to canoe through the Reservation via the Little River to Little Pond. However, the Reservation's significance as an urban wild limits its use for active recreation and requires careful planning to determine where and to what extent public access is appropriate.

The Reservation and the recently acquired Blair Pond also require a substantial amount of upgrading. Limited public resources for maintenance and management have made it difficult for the MDC to control undesirable uses, littering and dumping in these areas.

Similarly, the 320-acre Fresh Pond Reservation is a unique natural resource, providing the city with its public water supply and high quality open space and recreational opportunities including the city golf course, paths for

bicycling, walking and jogging and areas for sledding and picnicking. While maintenance of the Fresh Pond Reservation is generally good, more attention needs to be paid to the edges of the property, along Concord Avenue and Fresh Pond Parkway. These boundaries link Fresh Pond with Alewife and should be maintained to highlight the reservation's visual and open space amenities.

EXPAND OPEN SPACE NETWORK

With the important exception of the Alewife Reservation, most of Alewife's existing open space is in fact located around its perimeter. Very little exists in the interior portions of the business and commercial districts. As a result, much of its environment is stark, lacking pedestrian oriented amenities and easy, pleasant connections between the substantial open spaces which exist on the perimeter. An important goal of this plan therefore is to expand the open space network into the interior portions of the district. This can include improved pedestrian and bicycle connections with better sidewalks, tree planting, landscaping and new bicycle paths, as well as new open space. New open space, both public and private, should be encouraged where possible to help create an environment that is pleasant for those who work in or live near Alewife.

CREATE A SAFER ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE

Poor pedestrian and vehicular connections, badly lighted areas and isolated locations all contribute to concerns about public safety in Alewife, including the Alewife Reservation. The area's environmental and open space resources should be planned and used to create a safer sense of place and must be designed with the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, and both daytime and nighttime users in mind.



TRANSPORTATION



Over the past few decades, the Alewife area of Cambridge has had more than its share of controversial transportation issues; in the 1960s there was the proposed Route 2 Freeway Extension, in the 1970s came the various Red Line Extension alternatives, and in the 1980s, controversy as to the proper treatment of the Alewife Brook Parkway. The outgrowth of all this has been that the freeway treatment of Route 2 stops at Alewife, the Red Line terminates there with a station and a 2000 car parking garage on the west side of Alewife Brook Parkway, and the Alewife Brook Parkway will maintain its “parkway” character as much as possible. An example of the latter is the MDC’s bridge replacement project, which began construction in summer, 1993, and extends from Rindge Avenue to the rotary at Concord Avenue (where the Ground Round restaurant is located). This improvement will strengthen that parkway character with the inclusion of new landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, and bikepaths. All of these decisions will

shape the future of Alewife and the whole of West Cambridge by limiting the amount of vehicle traffic through the area.

The most recent traffic studies that have been conducted for the Alewife area are the City’s EIR (Environmental Impact Report) for the Alewife Local Roadway Improvement Project, approved by MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency) in 1984, and the various studies undertaken by the Massachusetts Highway Department in the mid- to late 1980s. All analysis in these studies has indicated that most intersections are now at or above capacity and that this condition is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. In addition, since only a small portion of the vehicles travelling through the area actually have a destination in Alewife - according to a recent CTPS (Central Transportation Planning Service) study, only 40% of the traffic even has a destination in Cambridge - any program to increase capacity would only make travel through the area easier and in all likelihood actually attract more traffic.

The Growth Policy document proposes a number of transportation and land use policies to mitigate automobile use while promoting an effective transportation network that is critical to a healthy economic base. These include: support for Transportation Demand Management strategies (commuter mobility) to promote non-single occupant vehicle forms of transportation, developing land use regulations that support transit use, improving the functioning of the city’s street network without increasing through capacity to facilitate bus and other non-automobile circulation, and encouraging all reasonable forms of non-automobile travel including bicycling and walking.

These policies provide a framework for addressing a critical planning issue facing Cambridge: how can the city achieve its goal of providing needed jobs and tax base at Alewife while protecting abutting neighborhoods from potential traffic impacts.

Two transportation goals are proposed to address this issue.

PROMOTE NON-SINGLE OCCUPANT VEHICLE TRAVEL

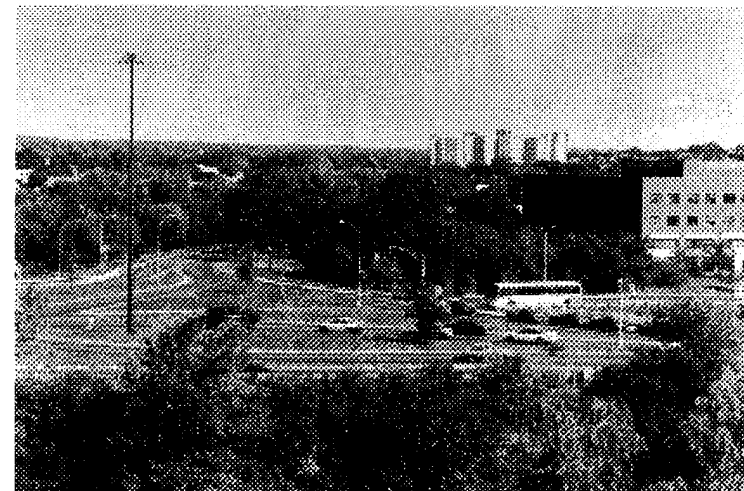
An important goal for the Alewife area, supported in the draft Cambridge Growth Policy document, is to implement projects and programs that will promote and make easier travel by transit, bicycle, walking, and non-solo driving options such as car pools and van pools. By implementing the transportation management measures in the Cambridge Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance, including improving the public transportation system and expanding the bicycle path network



and commuter mobility programs, the City can help control traffic growth in the area.

IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, TRANSIT AND VEHICULAR CONNECTIONS WITHIN ALEWIFE

Pedestrian and bicycle connections to encourage and make feasible these alternative forms of commuting, recommended as transportation management measures in the Cambridge Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance, are essential. Roadway improvements should not increase roadway capacity and should be restricted to connections which would improve safety, promote transit, improve emergency vehicle access, and allow for better bicycle and pedestrian circulation. Improved public transportation connections, both to and within Alewife, are essential elements of an improved transportation network.



HOUSING



Although Alewife is surrounded by residential areas of Cambridge, Arlington and Belmont, there are only a handful of residential uses within the district, located along the Concord Avenue edge. The current mix of uses found within Alewife and a physical environment that offers few residential amenities are presently incompatible with residential uses. However, given the substantial acreage of the district and the goals of this plan to better connect Alewife to the fabric of the city and to make it a safer environment, additional housing is desirable.

The Growth Policy document includes a number of land use and housing policies that support incorporating a residential component in the redevelopment of the city's industrial areas. The policies recognize the benefits housing can afford in strengthening existing neighborhood edges, creating appropriate transitions between uses, providing

opportunities for people who work in Cambridge to live here, limiting automobile use and encouraging more active use of these areas throughout the day.

At the same time, the Growth Policy document acknowledges the importance and need for industrial and commercial uses, some of which will be incompatible with new housing. This incompatibility can occur either because of the type of industrial activity or because of scarce land resources in which to accomplish multiple land use objectives. As a result, the future mix of uses in the city's industrial areas will need to be shaped by the particular circumstances of each area and balanced to help achieve all of the goals for that area.

Within the land use constraints and multiple land use objectives for the Alewife area, a goal of this plan is to:

ENCOURAGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOUSING

This plan recommends that new housing be added to extend and strengthen the residential uses at the edges of the Alewife area. The focus should be on encouraging those opportunities where housing is most appropriate, located adjacent to similar or compatible uses, and where it will help integrate the residential neighborhoods with other uses in the Alewife area.

In addition to promoting housing along the residential edges, housing will continue to be a permitted use in many of Alewife's subdistricts. This is intended to allow the flexibility to develop housing in the future if it is appropriate based on changes in the Alewife area and in market conditions. However, there are areas, particularly in the interior of the Quadrangle, where housing is neither a desirable nor a preferred use and should not be encouraged.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Alewife has been historically an important economic resource for the City of Cambridge. Its many industries have produced needed jobs and contributed to the City's tax base. As with the city's other industrial areas, Alewife has experienced change over the last few decades as traditional manufacturing has left the city and been replaced by new technologies and service companies.

The 1980s witnessed substantial new office development in various parts of Cambridge including Alewife. These projects contribute significantly to the tax base and created new jobs. Many of these, however, are white collar jobs requiring advanced education and training and do not replace the blue collar jobs which once existed. Intensive growth in the 1980s also raised concerns about future development patterns and their impact on neighborhoods and the city's physical environment.

These changes in the economy have resulted in new economic development strategies for the City. The diversity of incomes and educational levels held by the city's residents necessitates a range of jobs with different skill levels. Research and development in emerging technology industries will create manufacturing jobs in coming years. Cambridge will need to work to promote the expansion and retention of those industries for which the city has a competitive advantage.

The Growth Policy document recognizes that the city's evolving industrial areas are a valuable resource whose mix of uses must be carefully planned to achieve multiple goals and objectives. The economic development policies recommend that appropriate development be encouraged in these area to maintain the city's overall economic health, to expand the tax base, and to expand job opportunities for Cambridge residents. It further recommends strengthening the development of clusters of related uses for which the city, or a particular area of the city, has a competitive advantage.

The Growth Policy document also supports strengthening the city's existing retail and commercial areas and recommends that any new major retail activity be directed toward these areas. The land use policies encourage the inclusion of support retail services in the redevelopment of industrial areas to reduce the need to use the automobile during working hours and to enhance the liveliness of the area.

Alewife will continue to play an important role in the City's economic future. Recognizing this, the Alewife Master plan promotes two important economic development goals.

**ENCOURAGE PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT TO MAINTAIN
AND EXPAND THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF JOB
OPPORTUNITIES, INCREASE THE TAX BASE AND
UPGRADE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

Alewife represents a valuable economic resource for Cambridge. It is an employment base, providing a mix of jobs in a number of fields including retail, consulting services, biotechnology and other R&D and manufacturing uses, and is an important source of tax revenue for the city. As an evolving industrial district, Alewife is one of the few remaining areas in the city where new economic growth can occur. This economic growth will also result in physical changes to the district that can support the plan's environmental goals.

**ENCOURAGE STRONG RETAIL AREAS AND SUPPORT
SERVICES**

For Alewife to succeed as an area where businesses will choose to locate or expand, it is important to provide a mix of retail and other services to support the business environment and the needs of the surrounding community. Restaurants, shops, pharmacies, banks and similar services located within the Alewife area provide opportunities for workers and residents to use the area in a number of ways.

URBAN DESIGN



The Alewife area presents an extraordinary number of difficult urban design challenges. Unlike the majority of districts in Cambridge, virtually no one lives in the entire area; there is little of the vitality that flows from the mix of uses elsewhere in the city; and the scale and pattern of development is almost completely automobile-oriented, with few incentives to stroll through the area or to linger anywhere within it.

The Growth Policy document stresses the need for careful attention to the details of urban design that so dramatically impact the urban environment and the way people experience the city. It supports the idea that new development enhances the pedestrian environment and the public realm along city

streets. It recommends that the evolution of the city's industrial areas be encouraged, under the guidance of specific urban design plans. This will ensure appropriate transitions, particularly from residential edges and a mix of uses, densities and scales that will create and define an urban environment in keeping with the city's character.

The broadest urban design challenge is to make Alewife feel like it is part of Cambridge. More specifically, there are three primary Urban Design goals that govern the plan:

CREATE AN AREA THAT CONNECTS TO CAMBRIDGE

Today this area is much more a route from one place to another than it is a recognizable destination in and of itself. It is predominantly a set of spaces roughly aligned along Route 2, the Alewife Brook Parkway, the Fresh Pond Parkway, and the Fitchburg Main Line that carries through traffic and trains to Boston and points south and west. The area is bisected by these automobile routes and railroad rights-of-way. To some extent, these divisions define and buffer quite different uses. They also reinforce artificial separations. Linkages between recreational assets must be strengthened as must the integrity of pedestrian and bicycle ways; access routes between sectors must be facilitated but not where or in a way that such connections would encourage through traffic. Linkages should also be created so as to enhance the opportunities to use public transit as a means for accessing Alewife and for travelling within Alewife; this would include, for example, systems that would enable jitney or shuttle bus services to run. A goal of the Plan is to weave this area into the fabric of the city — to let its form, use and patterns of connectivity be dictated not merely by outside forces but by the needs of the community.

**CREATE A MORE COHESIVE AND
LIVABLE ENVIRONMENT**

In reweaving the fabric of this district into the community it is important that each piece or district also stand on its own in service of the constituencies who form it. Today the quality of each of the four primary subdistricts suffers not only from arterial edge conditions but also from a lack of internal coherence. Assets are not taken advantage of, and random development patterns have resulted in uses and forms lacking in identity and mutual support. A vision for each subdistrict is needed to provide cohesiveness and livability.

**CREATE A SENSE OF PLACE AND A
POSITIVE IMAGE FOR THE AREA**

The combination of an area dictated by the demands of through traffic and lacking either connectivity between, or coherence within the pieces has resulted in a nondescript area reminiscent of the automobile culture that dominates much of the country. The special character imparted to most of Cambridge's neighborhoods, work places and shopping areas is missing here. It is a goal of the plan to reassert that sense of place.

